Changing the Guard

Presidential Press Secretary Ron Ziegler rarely loses his temper. But he lost it last week when newsmen questioned him closely about the removal of Robert H. Taylor, the head of the White House Secret Service detail, after a run-in with Nixon's Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman. Ziegler claimed Taylor had been promoted to the somewhat lesser job of protecting visiting foreign dignitaries. "Why are you going through this charade?" demanded one White House correspondent. "Why not just level about it?" "You can assess what I am doing here as a charade," Ziegler shot back, "[but] I take issue with that. First of all, Mr. Taylor was not fired..."

The circumstances of his removal were somewhat unusual, however, to say the least. Taylor, 46, who has worked for the Secret Service since 1950, clashed with Haldeman last Nov. 3. Haldeman asked Taylor to lower the ropes at the airport in Providence, R.I., so that a crowd could come surging through the barriers to create a "spontaneous" welcome. Taylor turned down the request. When Haldeman insisted on having his way, according to one unverified account, Taylor threatened to have him arrested on the spot.

Taylor has been the head of the White House detail since 1967, but Haldeman reportedly went to Secret Service Director James J. Rowley and demanded his removal. (Rowley officially denies this.) On Feb. 9, without any public announcement, Taylor was replaced by Acting Chief Richard E. Keiser.

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